

Middletown Open Space & Fields Committee

Minutes of Meeting

December 18, 2013

A meeting of the Open Space & Fields Committee took place on Wednesday, December 18, at 5:30 p.m. in the Community Room of the Middletown Police Station, Middletown, Rhode Island. The meeting was called to order by Mason Hawes, Chairman

Member Present: Austin Prendergast, Mike Richards and Ralph Thomas

Members Absent: Cheryl Boergesson, Nicholas Coogan and Ed Sisk

Ex-officio Members:

Present: Matt Sullivan, Planning Board Liaison;

Absent Robert Johnson, Conservation Commission

Town Officials: Dick Adams, Town Council Liaison

Others Present: None

Agenda

The minutes of the November 20 meeting were approved as drafted.

Old Business:

- Town Memorial Policy. Maureen Mauer, Executive Assistant to the Town Administrator, received the draft and is presently revising it.**

When her revision is complete, it will be provided to the committee for review.

- **Properties Updates.**

- o **Planning for Boulevard/Tibbets Recreation Facility.** The steering committee, which has six months to complete its work, has met twice.

There are a number of stakeholders, each bringing forward a proposal. The potential uses range from active recreation, e.g., baseball and lacrosse, to walking trails and gardening. Major items for study by the committee includes: (1) The constraints in the easement held by the Aquidneck Land Trust and whether it will be flexible in agreeing, should it become necessary to agree to revise some of them; (2) responsibility for maintenance and upkeep; (3) developing a long-term phasing plan for development of the property; and (4) traffic patterns in the area, including access to and egress from the property. The next meeting will be January 22.

- o **The Valley Trails.** The grant application now pending with the Department of Environmental Management (DEM) is likely to be approved, providing \$400,000 for 2 1/2 miles of trails. In addition, \$10,000 will be provided by the town for the planting of trees.

- **Other Parks.** No updates.

- **Purgatory Walkway Update.** The Town Administrator advised that he would be meeting with DEM officials in the near future. It appears likely that when the transfer of the property from the Department of Transportation occurs that DEM will build the walkway. He indicated that it was also likely that they would agree to the clearing of some of the undergrowth that now blocks the vista and to a freeze on placing

memorial benches on the property. He indicated that he had signed an agreement with DEM to continue the current practice under which the Town mows the property. Finally, he indicated that there was currently no movement to establish a park on the property, as some had said should be considered.

- **Beach Protection.** Although no formal protection preventing development exists, the Town Administrator was of the opinion that the beach would not be developed for the following reasons: (1) There is a Town ordinance prohibiting development (while acknowledging that a Town Council could revoke or revise the ordinance); (2) that the Coastal Resources Management Council would not permit development; and (3) public sentiment in Middletown was opposed to development.

- **Beach Facility Advisory Committee Report.** A public hearing will be held on the committee's recommendations before its report is presented to the Town Council.

- **BRAC Properties Update.** The Town Administrator has advised that he will travel to Washington, DC, in January, hopefully to sign an agreement giving title to the former Navy Lodge site at the intersection of West Main Road and Coddington Highway to the Town.

Some of the foregoing information was provided by the Town Administrator to the OS&F Committee's President and Recording Secretary in a meeting at Town Hall.

- **New Business:**

- **Proposed Agenda Items for January Meeting.**

- o **Town Memorial Policy Update**

- o **Properties Updates**

- **Tibbets/Boulevard Steering Committee**

- **The Valley Trails**

- **Other Parks.**

- o **Purgatory Walkway Update**

- o **Beach Facility Advisory Committee Report**

- o **Park Visits**

- o **Earth Day**

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 6:55 PM. The next meeting will be on Wednesday, December 18, 2013 at 5:30 PM in the Community Room at the Middletown Police Station, 123 Valley Road, Middletown.

Ralph Thomas

Recording Secretary